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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, April 1, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD FOOLISHNESS." Information from the 1939 Yearbook of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Lots of people get fooled about food. Food quacks are with us still and they do a big business. They use many of the tricks the patent medicine salesman used a generation ago. Only today the quacks fool you with a lot of scientific words that sound like the real thing.

You have probably met, or at least heard about, a very common kind of quack -- the food lecturer or health promoter. He has a smooth manner and line. The letters after his name make you believe he is a real scientist with a degree in medicine or nutrition. Very often those letters stand for a fake degree from a third-rate institution. His sales talk mixed the true and the false so you can hardly tell them apart. Very often he is promoting ^{some} food fad or some special food product.

But before you get taken in by one of these quacks, here are some things pointed out in "Food and Life" the 1939 Yearbook of Agriculture. A true scientist is conservative. He avoids extravagant claims. He never recommends cure-alls in food. He never sets up one kind of food or specially prepared and packaged products as better than a good everyday all-around diet of familiar wholesome foods. So when the postman brings you a lot of cheap advertising about special health foods, don't be too quick to believe all you read. Or when you hear about ^{such} and a "perfectly balanced food," or "energy food", or "health concentrate," go slow. Under the name of "health food" manufacturers have sold weird concoctions of ground alfalfa, dried vegetables, morganic salts, and flavorings. Before you put down

good money for a food preparation to cure what ails you, ask your county agent, or just use plain common sense. The U. S. Department of Agriculture's bulletin called, "Food to Fit the Family Income," tells you how to plan well-balanced meals for the health of your family. And you won't find any mention of special health foods in that bulletin.

One of the words you can easily get fooled on is "balanced". You hear about this or that food as "scientifically balanced." That word applied to a food doesn't really mean anything. No one food can make a well-balanced diet. No one food added to your meals can insure you of getting all the different nutrients you need. When you hear talk of a balanced food, take it, as the old saying goes, with a grain of salt.

Another word that can fool you is energy. An energy food means a food for fuel -- a food containing calories. Sugar and starch and fat are energy or fuel foods -- but they don't necessarily make you energetic. The word "energy" in connection with food doesn't mean vitality, vigor, strength, or pep. If you feed your child nothing but sugar and fat, you'll fill him with energy food, but you won't make him vigorous or strong.

Still another word to get fooled on is acid or acidosis. You hear about indigestion coming from an "acid stomach." Or you hear about the dire results of an "acid system." Actually acidosis is a rather rare condition of the blood. Any normal body has the mechanism to take care of both excess acid and excess alkali. If you spend money treating imaginary acidosis, you're wasting your money.

As for an "acid stomach", every normal stomach is acid. The acid is there to digest food properly. Occasionally people have too little acid for good digestion or too much, but that is something for a doctor to treat. Don't be persuaded to take up some new strange diet, or some digestive remedy as an "anti-acid", or "a relief for acid stomach," or a cure for "acid indigestion." And don't be afraid to eat oranges and tomatoes and other good foods because they are acid.

A good many people are fooled about food combinations. You'll find food faddists who say you shouldn't eat protein and starch together. Then there are superstitions about dangers from eating sea food and milk together, or cherries and milk, or some other combination. But any good doctor or nutrition scientist will tell you there's no such thing as a wrong combination of good foods. All studies have shown that the human digestion is capable of taking care of all the various constituents in natural foods when eaten together at one meal.

Finally, keep your fingers crossed when you hear about any one food or special diet you can use to cure arthritis, kidney trouble, high blood pressure, or other chronic diseases. There's sure to be a quack around the corner waiting for you if you let yourself be fooled by such claims.

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